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COURTS

Cassie Accuses Sean Combs of Rape and Sexual Abuse in Shocking Lawsuit

The R&B singer met the Bad Boy Records mogul in 2005 before signing to his label and dating him until 2018. In a lawsuit, she said that their relationship was defined by his violence and degradation. Combs has denied the allegations.



BY DAN ADLER

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PHOTO BY SHAREIF ZIYADAT/GETTY IMAGES.

 SAVE

In 2022, **Sean Combs** received the Lifetime Achievement Award at the BET Awards. As a new lawsuit filed by **Cassandra Ventura** recounts, he thanked his former girlfriend and Bad Boy Records signee in his acceptance speech. “I have to give a special shoutout, thank you, love, to the people that was really there for me.” He named several people, including Ventura, better known as the R&B singer Cassie, “for holding me down in the dark times, love.”

In the suit, filed on Thursday in Manhattan federal court, Ventura said that she spent these times trapped by Combs in a yearslong cycle of abuse, violence, and sex trafficking. The complaint alleges a disturbing pattern of assault and retaliation that took place for the duration of their relationship beginning when a 37-year old Combs, an established power player in hip-hop, met Ventura as an aspiring 19-year old entertainer in 2005. He signed her to his high-flying label and within a few years, according to the suit, lured her into “an ostentatious, fast-paced, and drug-fueled lifestyle, and into a romantic relationship with him her boss, one of the most powerful men in the entertainment industry, and a vicious, cruel, and controlling man nearly two decades her senior.”

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Ventura claimed in the suit that Combs repeatedly beat her and forced her to have sex with male prostitutes while he filmed the encounters. According to the suit, Combs described these encounters as “freak offs” designed to fulfill a fantasy he called “voyeurism,” and they often involved drug use that eventually sent Ventura on a path towards addiction. Towards the end of their relationship in 2018, Ventura said in the complaint, Combs forced his way into her home and raped her.

In one of the alleged “freak offs” in 2016, the suit said, Combs punched Ventura in the face and gave her a black eye. When he fell asleep and she tried to leave their Los Angeles hotel room, Ventura claimed, he woke up and followed her into the hallway, where he threw glass vases at her. According to the suit, Combs paid the hotel \$50,000 for the footage.

“After years in silence and darkness,” Ventura said in a statement. “I am finally ready to tell my story, and to speak up on behalf of myself and for the benefit of other women who face violence and abuse in their relationships.” She filed the lawsuit under the Adult Survivors Act in New York, enacted last year, which grants alleged victims of sexual abuse a one-year window, ending next week, to file civil complaints in instances where the statute of limitations has passed.

“Mr. Combs vehemently denies these offensive and outrageous allegations,” Combs’s attorney **Ben Brafman** said in a statement. “For the past 6 months, Mr. Combs, has been subjected to Ms. Ventura’s persistent demand of \$30 million, under the threat of writing a damaging book about their relationship, which was unequivocally rejected as blatant blackmail. Despite withdrawing her initial threat, Ms. Ventura has now resorted to filing a lawsuit riddled with baseless and outrageous lies, aiming to tarnish Mr. Combs’ reputation and seeking a pay day.”

In response to Brafman’s statement, Ventura’s attorney Douglas Wigdor said, “Mr. Comb’s offered Ms. Ventura eight figures to silence her and prevent the filing of this lawsuit. She rejected his efforts and decided to give a voice to all woman who suffer in silence. Ms. Ventura should be applauded for her bravery.”

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In 2011, during a rough patch in Combs and Ventura's relationship, according to the suit, Ventura briefly dated the rapper **Kid Cudi**. When Combs returned from a trip, the suit said, he demanded that Ventura participate in a "freak off." During this encounter, Ventura claimed, he found emails between her and Kid Cudi on her phone and lunged at her with a corkscrew placed between his fingers. Ventura ran away to Kid Cudi's home, she said, before returning because she felt that she wouldn't be able to escape Combs and his staff, whom the suit described as his "network of enforcers." According to the suit, Combs then hit her several times and kicked her in the back.

The following year, the suit said, Combs told Ventura he was going to blow up Kid Cudi's Car with the rapper and his friends home when it happened. "Around that time," the suit said, "Kid Cudi's car exploded in his driveway." ("This is all true," a spokesperson for Kid Cudi **told** the *New York Times*.)

"Mr. Combs asserted complete control over Ms. Ventura's personal and professional life, thereby ensuring her inability to escape his hold," the suit said. "He provided unprecedented avenues for success for the aspiring artist, but in return, demanded obedience, loyalty, and silence."

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